

**CLAIM AMENDMENTS**

Cancel claim 2 without prejudice;

Rewrite claims 1, 3, 4 and 12 as follows; and

Add the following new claim 18:

1. (Currently Amended) A rotary printing machine comprising a pair of sheet holding and transfer systems disposed in side-by-side relation for transferring sheets in the printing machine, said sheet holding and transfer systems defining a sheet transfer area ~~therebetween~~ at a tangential point between said sheet holding and transfer systems,

a sheet guide apparatus disposed underneath said transfer area, said sheet guide apparatus including a sheet guide which defines a guide surface for guiding movement of sheets adjacent said transfer area, said sheet guide including a comb shaped end with spaced apart guide fingers adjacent said transfer area,

a first pneumatic system for directing air in said sheet guide and through said guide surface for guiding sheet movement along said guide surface, and

a second separate pneumatic system operable for blowing an air stream over an external end of said ~~sheet guide~~ comb and into spaces between said guide fingers and toward said transfer area to facilitate reliable transfer of sheets between said sheet holding and transfer systems.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 2 1 in which said sheet holding and transfer systems comprise a pair of sheet carrying cylinders.

4. (Currently Amended) The printing machine of claim 2 1 in which said sheet transfer and holding systems comprise one sheet-carrying cylinder and a circulating conveyor system.

5. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said second separate pneumatic system is located adjacent a sheet outlet defined by said sheet holding and transfer systems from which sheets are directed.

6. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said second separate pneumatic system is located adjacent a sheet inlet defined by said sheet holding and transfer systems into which sheets are directed.

7. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said second pneumatic system comprises a plurality of controllable fans for directing a low pressure high, volume air flow.

8. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said second pneumatic system is mounted on said sheet guide.

9. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 1 in which said sheet guide includes a first flow duct communicating with openings in said guide surface, said first pneumatic system communicating with said first flow duct, and a second flow duct communicating with said second separate pneumatic system and having at least one discharge outlet opening aimed in the direction of the transfer area.

10. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 5 in which said sheet guide includes a first flow duct communicating with openings in said guide surface, said first pneumatic system communicating with said first flow duct, and a second flow duct communicating with said second separate pneumatic system and having at least one discharge outlet opening aimed in the direction of said sheet outlet.

11. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 6 in which said sheet guide includes a first flow duct communicating with openings in said guide surface, said first a pneumatic system communicating with said first flow duct, and a second flow

duct communicating with said second separate pneumatic system and having at least one discharge outlet opening aimed in the direction of said sheet inlet.

12. (Currently Amended) A rotary printing machine comprising a pair of sheet holding and transfer systems disposed in side-by-side relation for transferring sheets in the printing machine, said sheet holding and transfer systems defining a sheet transfer area therebetween,

a sheet guide apparatus disposed underneath said transfer area, said sheet guide apparatus including a sheet guide which defines a guide surface for guiding movement of sheets adjacent said transfer area, said sheet guide including a comb with spaced apart guide fingers adjacent said transfer area, ~~and~~

a pneumatic system operable for directing air in said sheet guide and through said sheet guide surface for guiding sheet movement along said guide system, and

a pneumatic system ~~separate from said sheet guide~~ operable for blowing an air stream externally over an end of said comb and into spaces between said guide fingers toward said transfer area to facilitate reliable transfer of sheets between said sheet holding and transfer systems.

13. (Previously Presented) The rotary printing machine of claim 12 in which said transfer area is defined by a tangent point between said sheet holding and transfer systems.

14. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 13 in which said sheet holding and transfer systems comprise a pair of sheet carrying cylinders.

15. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 13 in which said sheet transfer and holding systems comprise one sheet-carrying cylinder and a circulating conveyor system.

16. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 12 in which said pneumatic system is mounted on said sheet guide.

17. (Previously Presented) The printing machine of claim 12 in which said pneumatic system includes a flow duct mounted on said sheet guide, said flow duct having at least one discharge outlet opening oriented in the direction of the transfer area.

18. (New) The printing machine of claim 12 in which said pneumatic system for directing air in said sheet guide and through said guide surface is separate from the pneumatic system for blowing an air stream externally over an end of said comb and into the spaces between said guide fingers.